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A VOTE

FOR THE

SLAVE TRADE,

RECOLLECTED AND CONSIDERED.

"Pennsylvania feels also a high responsibility to a great moral principle which she has long ago adopted, with the most impressive solemnity, for the rule of her own conduct, and which she stands bound to assert and maintain, wherever her influence and power can be applied, without injury to the just rights of her sister states. It is this principle, and this alone, that now governs her conduct. She holds it too sacred to suffer it to be debased by association with any party or factious views, and she will pursue it with the singleness of heart, and with the firm but unoffending temper which belong to a conscientious discharge of duty, and which, I hope I may say, have characterized her conduct in all her relations."

Speech of John Sergeant, Esqr. in Congress, on the Missouri Question.

"All liberal minds and all parts of the Union, have with one voice agreed in the necessity of abolishing that detestable traffic in human flesh, the Slave trade—the foreign Slave trade."

From the same.

PHILADELPHIA.

1820.



TO THE *PEOPLE OF PENNSYLVANIA.*

Several nations have successively and boastingly claimed the merit of being the first to propose and effectuate the abolition of negro slavery, yet the real and substantial glory of having done so, settles upon the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Though the wise and virtuous in all countries regarded human bondage as a stain upon the christian civilization of the world, that portion of our fellow citizens emphatically called Friends, and generally termed Quakers, were more sedulous and persevering than the rest, in their efforts to remove from our political code, the least trace of its existence; they, indeed, made the subject their peculiar care, identified it with sincerity in the practice of their principles, and devoted to it their time, talents and energies. By their petition to the Legislature in 1788, they produced an effect upon the public mind which could not be resisted, and which terminated in the passage of the ever to be venerated law, for the "more extensive and effectual" abolition of slavery. Our people went generally hand in hand with these philanthropic and pious reformers, and eagerly shared in the honor of the result.

At the outset of this grand and humane endeavour, the worst and most inveterate passions which degrade our nature, were to be encountered. Avarice and pride could not bear to part with their property in flesh, and their control over souls. An opposition was got up under the auspices of the cruel, the miserly and the ignorant; and in spite of the generous and noble spirit which pervaded our community, there were not wanting many who had the hardihood still to utter and maintain the detestable and heart-sickening doctrines of human slavery. Absorbed in the shameless desire of gain, and destitute of all sympathy for the woes of their fellow creatures, they have placed their own characters imperishably upon record; and, as long as religion, morality, virtue or true policy is resident among men, their principles must be condemned.

Among these advocates of the slave trade, almost foremost, from his wealth and influence, we find JOSEPH HIESTER!

As this individual, relying no doubt, upon our total want of memory, has come forward to claim the highest station in the gift of the people, we are bound by a sacred obligation as citizens, to examine into his pretensions, and to ascertain whether we can gratify his ambition, consistently with an attachment to that religion, whose holy dictates he violated, with those principles, in the exercise of which we feel so much personal and political pride, and with that cause, which is yet, in other and distant places, in lively and uncertain agitation.

For this purpose, the following brief and authentic view of the course of his conduct, during the session of the legislature in 1788, is submitted to an enlightened and conscientious public. The votes of a member of the House of Representatives, recorded amid the ayes and noes, are the simplest as well as most unquestionable evidence of his claims to political support. By these let Joseph Hiester be tested, and we venture to assert that no faithful christian, no believer in the unalienable rights of mankind, no lover of Liberty, no enemy to oppression and persecution, can ever be brought to give him aid, directly or indirectly.

The contrast presented by exhibiting the conduct of William Findlay, in relation to the same subject, has been drawn forward by an unwarrantable and false accusation, made by a political opponent. That opponent has, indeed, long since regretted his error, but it is due to the unjustly charged, to diffuse his vindication, clear and emphatic as it is, as widely as the slander, whether written or verbal, can possibly extend. The friends of the present chief magistrate, disdain to triumph in this display of what was mere duty—they would have been surprized had he acted otherwise than he did: similar actions are they trust and believe, common to the citizens of this state:—but how truly brilliant and signal does this single specimen of correct and manly sentiment appear, when depicted along side of the dark and disgraceful conduct of his antagonist, Joseph Hiester.

JOSEPH HIESTER AND SLAVERY.

By the minutes of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, as published under the authority of the Commonwealth, in page 104, it appears that the following petition was presented on the 23d of February 1788.

*To the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
the address and petition of the religious society called Qua-
kers,*

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH,

That incited by an apprehension of real duty, and encouraged by the laudable essay, which has been made by the legislature of this state, for the promotion of personal freedom, we take the liberty of addressing you on this very interesting and important subject.

The natural rights, and civil liberties of men have been so fully investigated and declared, and at this time are so generally acknowledged to be unalienable, we conceive it unnecessary to attempt to illustrate the blessings of the enjoyment thereof, or the grievous oppression and distress, to which they are subjected, who continue to be deprived of that invaluable privilege.

The law entitled "an act for the gradual abolition of Slavery," passed in the year 1780, has answered some of the desirable purposes, for which it was enacted; and we trust that an impression of the same affecting considerations which produced that law, will be of sufficient weight to induce you to render it more extensive and effectual. Having been informed, and we believe it be a sorrowful truth, that some commercial persons, inattentive to the feelings of humanity, and regardless of the principles of justice, have in opposition to the spirit and intention of that law, *equipped vessels in the port of Philadelphia, for the iniquitous traffic to Africa for slaves*; and others actuated by the like avaricious motives, have used means of violence and craft, to captivate divers of the poor blacks, who were legally entitled to freedom, and transported them from thence to the West India Islands, and other parts, where they have been sold into unconditional sla-

We subjoin a copy of this deed, which, in language plain, concise, and forcible, states to the reader the conclusive reasons which have prompted its author:—they are reasons striking at the root of slavery, and attesting the solidity of judgment and fervour of conviction which animated the master in giving freedom to his slave.

Manumission of Negro George.

Know all men by these presents, that I, William Findlay, of the county of Franklin, and commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that whereas I am by the laws of the said commonwealth, entitled to the services of a negro man, named GEORGE. (aged about thirty-three years) for and during his natural life; yet, *believing that the principles of slavery are repugnant to those of justice, and totally irreconcilable with that rule, which requires us "to do unto others as we would wish to be done by,"* I do for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, hereby release unto him the said George, all my right, interest and claim, or pretensions of claim whatsoever, to his person or services, or to any estate he may hereafter acquire; and he shall hereafter act for himself without any interruption from me, or any person claiming for, by, from or under me, and be deemed and taken as absolutely free. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal, this nineteenth day of March, Anno Domini 1807.

WILLIAM FINDLAY. [L. s.]

Signed and sealed in the presence of us.

ROBERT SMITH, ELIZA SMITH.

Franklin County, set.

Personally came before me, James Irwin, one of the justices for said county, WILLIAM FINDLAY, and acknowledged the above instrument of writing to be his act and deed, and that it might be recorded as such.—Witness the said justice, at Mercersburg, March 20th, 1807. JAMES IRWIN. [L. s.]

A true copy, taken from the original, the 10th day of August, 1807. EDWARD CRAWFORD, *Recorder.*

Pennsylvania.

Franklin County, set.

In testimony that the within is a true copy taken from the original as recorded in record vol. 7, page 521, I [L. s.] have hereunto set my hand and official seal, at Chambersburg, this sixth day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty.

For P. S. DECKERT, *Recorder.*

D. SPANGLER.